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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7400th meeting
Friday, 6 March 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Gombo
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Malaysia	Mr. Haniff
	New Zealand	Mr. McLay
	Nigeria	Mr. Sarki
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Mr. John Ging, Director of the Coordination and Response Division in the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: In the six weeks since I last briefed the Council, on 26 January (see S/PV.7368), there have been a number of significant developments related to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The most pivotal was the signing, in Minsk on 12 February by the Trilateral Contact Group and rebel representatives, of a package of measures for implementing the Minsk agreements. The agreement, the result of tireless diplomacy on the part of Chancellor Merkel, President Hollande, President Poroshenko and President Putin, provides a road map for lasting peace in eastern Ukraine.

Recognizing that fact, on 17 February the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2202 (2015), thereby providing the peace process in eastern Ukraine with a binding international framework for further engaging all sides to find an urgent and lasting solution to the conflict. However, as we converged in this Chamber on that same day (see S/PV.7384), the fight for Debaltseve reached its climax, with hundreds, if not thousands, of innocent civilians caught in the crossfire. As Ambassador Tagliavini, one of the signatories to the 12 February Minsk agreement, remarked to the Council on 27 February (see S/PV.7395), the rebels' unabated attacks for control over that strategic area were in clear violation of the agreement they had signed only five days before.

Since 18 February, the situation appears to have calmed. However, as we are all well aware, the ceasefire remains fragile, not yet having taken hold firmly across the region. Sporadic violations are reported frequently, including in the south near Mariupol and, once again, near Donetsk airport.

The Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has monitored some withdrawals of heavy military equipment from the line of contact but, due to a lack of access and freedom of movement for its monitors, the Mission remains unable to verify the true extent of that process. It is also yet to receive baseline information regarding the sides' inventory, routes for withdrawal and where the weapons will be stored. As per the commitments undertaken by the parties in Minsk, full and unfettered access must be given to the OSCE and the withdrawal of heavy weaponry must commence urgently, transparently and comprehensively.

We are aware that there will be no significant traction on the political track unless the prerequisite ceasefire and withdrawal of weapons are fully implemented. The history of this conflict has taught us that the window of opportunity to make those processes irreversible is limited.

Eastern Ukraine still appears to be in limbo as we await the full implementation of the Minsk package of measures. The road ahead will be difficult, but it is critical that all concerned strictly adhere to, and commence the good-faith implementation of, that agreement. We welcome the continued efforts of the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany, as well as the crucial role played by the OSCE.

Let me also take this opportunity to touch briefly on President Poroshenko's 17 February statement noting that Ukraine will be requesting a possible deployment of a United Nations-mandated peace mission to Ukraine. Subsequent to that, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Klimkin held discussions with the Secretary-General, Under-Secretary-General Ladsous and me on this issue. We informed the Foreign Minister that it was a decision for the members of the Security Council and that the Secretariat would be guided by the

Council's decision. To date, no formal request has been received from Ukraine.

With reference to the OSCE briefings to the Council on 27 February and the call for the United Nations to do more, the Secretariat continues its close cooperation with the OSCE on what more could be done to support the OSCE's difficult and complex mandates.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ging.

Mr. Ging: On behalf of Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, I would like to deliver the following statement on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

One year ago Ukraine had no displaced people; now, as a result of the conflict, there are almost 1.1 million people registered as internally displaced, more than 100,000 of them displaced in the last month. More than 670,000 people have fled to neighbouring countries. Displacement continues, as pauses in the fighting in some locations has allowed people who are trapped to flee. More than 2 million people are living in conflict-affected areas, the majority of them with limited access to basic services. Only 180,000 people now remain in the city of Horlivka, as compared to 276,000 before the conflict. Only 8,000 people remain in Dokuchaievsk, as compared to 30,000 before the conflict. And in Debaltseve, where the re-conflict population stood at over 25,000, fewer than 7,000 people remain — 5,000 of them are estimated to be living underground in basements and improvised bunkers.

Five million people across the country are now in need of humanitarian assistance — 1 million in Government-controlled areas and 3 million in non-Government-controlled areas. Approximately 1.4 million people have no access to health care. Those remaining in conflict-affected areas, in particular in densely populated urban areas, face ongoing security threats due to military activities. Lives have been lost, basic life-saving services have been disrupted, access to banking and cash services is limited, food and non-food items are increasingly scarce and expensive and there is an upsurge in lawlessness across the country.

We welcome the package of measures for the implementation of the minsk agreements, but continue to urge all parties to the conflict to adhere to the 15 February ceasefire and to protect civilians. The ceasefire remains fragile but, where observed, has allowed a limited increase in humanitarian access. Most recently, on 19 February, 62 tons of humanitarian aid was delivered to Donetsk city by United Nations convoy. Supplies included essential hygiene items, warm clothes, blankets, condensed milk powder, drinking water and medicines.

Despite limited humanitarian access to affected areas due to insecurity and administrative obstacles, by the end of 2014 humanitarian actors had provided health kits to 2.6 million people, vaccinations for 30,000 people, clean water and sanitation facilities for more than 100,000 displaced people and food supplies for 100,000 people. Despite those efforts, needs still far outweigh the combined capacity of the humanitarian community and the Government of Ukraine to respond. It is imperative that humanitarian actors be able to reach those in need with life-saving assistance. We call on all parties to the conflict to facilitate the safe and unimpeded passage of aid and aid workers and to lift any administrative obstacles to such passage.

The Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Neal Walker, is coordinating the humanitarian response of United Nations agencies and national and international non-governmental organizations to ensure that assistance reaches those who need it most in an effective, efficient and timely manner. Coordination structures, including sector-specific clusters, have been put in place in Ukraine. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is present in the six key areas across the country.

Additional funding to address the immediate humanitarian needs of those affected by this conflict is urgently needed. Ukraine's humanitarian response plan, launched on 24 February, calls for $316 million to reach 3.2 million people in the most dire humanitarian need. To date, only 13 per cent of that appeal — a mere $42.2 million — has been either received or pledged. We thank those Member States that have contributed, with the largest financial contributions so far coming from the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Commission, Germany and Denmark. Several Member States, most notably the Russian Federation, have provided significant material assistance.

It is essential that the millions of civilians caught up in this conflict, many of whom have been traumatized by violence and severe hardship, be able to return to

their homes and be given access to basic, life-saving services is restored. We call on all parties to the conflict to respect the ceasefire and put an end to the violence.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ging for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Šimonović.

Mr. Šimonović: The ninth report of the United Nations Human Rights Mission in Ukraine, whose mandate has just been renewed for a further three months, was released on 2 March. It covers the period from 1 December 2014 to 15 February 2015. Today I will highlight some of the report's key findings and provide an update on developments since the cut-off date.

Although since the 12 February Minsk agreement the ceasefire in Ukraine has held up in general, with a few isolated incidents of small arms and mortar shelling reported, the human rights situation, especially in eastern Ukraine, has remained alarming. Particularly in January and the first half of February, the stark escalation of hostilities led to increased violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, with a sharp spike in casualties and devastating consequences for the local population. From mid-April 2014 until 15 February 2015, at least 5,665 people were documented as killed; by 5 March, the figure increased to at least 5,820. Given that full reports on casualties, especially near Donetsk airport and in the Debaltseve area, are still pending, we estimate that the total number of people killed in eastern Ukraine has now passed the 6,000 mark.

Allow me to highlight a number of disturbing trends in the human rights situation in Ukraine.

First, during the reporting period there was an increased use of sophisticated and heavy weaponry, including multiple launch rocket systems. Those types of weapons were used during the 24 January attack on Mariupol, which killed 31 people, including two children. In the east up until the ceasefire of 15 February, and in the Debaltseve area beyond the ceasefire, there was continued indiscriminate shelling of highly populated civilian areas, both in areas controlled by the Government and those controlled by the armed groups, with an escalating toll on civilians. The deliberate targeting of civilians may constitute a war crime and could amount to a crime against humanity if widespread or systematic. Attacks caused heavy damage to civilian property and vital infrastructure. By 4 March, the number of residential buildings destroyed during the conflict period on the territory of the Donetsk region exceeded 9,500. Approximately 150,000 local residents of the Donetsk region alone still remain without water, gas and electricity. Hospitals, schools and kindergartens have been shelled in both Government-controlled and armed-groups controlled areas, limiting access to health care and education. The situation is aggravated by the alleged continued inflow of heavy weaponry and foreign fighters from the Russian Federation.

Secondly, many civilians have remained trapped in the conflict zone, with ongoing and severe restrictions on the freedom of movement. According to the Government, the situation of approximately 4,000 people remaining in 21 facilities of institutional care in the areas under the control of armed groups is particularly precarious. The lack of vital medicines and food is also of major concern. The armed groups have on several occasions stated that they will not allow the evacuation of people from social care institutions, such as older persons or the bedridden. Nothing has been done to evacuate prisoners either. It is essential that these most vulnerable groups be evacuated as a matter of priority, and as part of an obligation under international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, there is a clear indication that the divide in Ukrainian society continues to deepen. With every new attack on the civilian population, with every new case of arbitrary detention and torture, with every new deprivation of basic services to those remaining in the territory under the control of the armed groups, with every new displacement, the divide deepens. A terrorist attack in Kharkiv, which killed four people by an explosive device on 22 February, and 14 attacks in Odesa since December, targeting pro-Maidan offices and supporters, are further contributing to the negative trend. At the same time, there is growing dissatisfaction among the Ukrainian population over the fighting in the east, and there have been a series of anti-mobilization protests around the country.

Fourthly, the humanitarian situation is increasingly affecting the social and economic rights of the population as a whole. The enormous influx of registered internally displaced persons (IDPs), as already reported by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, is placing an ever-heavier burden on the Government and on the Ukrainian people. Just this week, the Parliament passed a bill reducing already low pensions in order to satisfy

conditions for the much-needed International Monetary Fund loan and to allow social payments to IDPs. It is clear that the price of the conflict rises for every individual Ukrainian, as the cost of living continues to soar, the threat of potential gas and heating shortages becomes more likely and the value of the hryvnia declines, along with the standard of living. Ultimately, the much-needed and long-promised reforms are severely jeopardized as they are moved further and further down the Government's list of priorities.

Against that backdrop, it remains absolutely crucial that the Government show resolve and commitment to fight corruption and to render impartial justice and accountability for all human rights violations, regardless of the perpetrators or the victims. Impartial accountability can help deter future human rights violations, preserve the confidence of the people in their Government and contribute to the healing of psychological wounds. In that context, the judgement rendered by the regional administrative court on 19 February, which found that the State emergency service was responsible for inaction during 2 May disorders in Odesa, is a welcome step in the right direction. Nonetheless, progress in the investigations into human rights violations related to the Maidan events remains slow. After one year, only four persons have been arrested, two of whom are being tried currently. However, as yet no one has been convicted for the violence that led to the deaths of 117 people.

Impartial justice and accountability must also apply to those who have committed violations in the context of the hostilities. While the initiation of some 49 criminal proceedings against servicemen of the Ukrainian armed forces and National Guard for human rights violations was a welcome development, it appears that most cases were not pursued due to disputes over the official status of those presumably involved. In the same vein, it is also very alarming that the key defence witness in the case against former mayor of Slovyansk Nelya Shtepa was abducted and found murdered on 30 January, which effectively intimidates other witnesses from coming forward.

At the same time, the armed groups continue to violate the most basic human rights of the population trapped in the areas under their control. The Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine continues to document cases of torture, ill-treatment and disappearances. On 22 January, a dozen Ukrainian servicemen captured at Donetsk airport were forced to march through the streets of Donetsk. Several were reportedly physically assaulted by members of the armed groups and by onlookers. It is recalled that such degrading and humiliating treatment of prisoners may constitute a war crime.

The situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea is also deteriorating, with systematic human rights violations affecting mostly Crimean Tatars and those who opposed the March referendum. The Deputy Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Mr. Ahtem Ciygoz, was placed in pre-trial detention for his participation in a pro-Ukrainian protest a year ago. That is in addition to the continued ban against the historical leaders of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Mr. Mustafa Jemilev and current Chair Refat Chubarov, to return to Crimea. According to Mr. Chubarov, there are serious allegations of attempts to break the autonomy of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis and replace its leadership with pro-Russian candidates. The pressure on Crimean Tatar media also continues.

It is absolutely necessary that all sides fully respect the 12 February Minsk agreement. It is the only way out of a crisis, which is not only national but also regional and, increasingly, global. I especially welcome the all-for-all formula for the release of detainees. I have advocated for the formula with representatives of the armed groups, the Government and the facilitators. However, so far it has not been properly applied. Piecemeal prisoner exchanges, which have taken place so far, stimulate arbitrary arrests in order to have more prisoners to exchange. The full implementation of an all-for-all release formula would be an important confidence-building measure and a real test of the commitment of parties to end the conflict. I therefore call on both parties to implement it fully and immediately.

At the same time, the Ukrainian pilot Nadiya Savchenko remains in solitary confinement in a pre-trial detention centre in the Russian Federation. It is highly important to ensure that Ms. Savchenko is released from custody immediately. She should either be released under the all-for-all formula or on humanitarian grounds, because of her health conditions.

In conclusion, the human rights situation in Ukraine remains grave. There are fears that hostilities may resume, and concerns about a military campaign on Mariupol. That could entail many more casualties, significantly escalate the conflict and lead to its further internationalization. After more than 6,000

killed, 1 million displaced, hundreds of thousands of refugees, and continuing violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, the conflict has still not reached the point of no return. However, the window of opportunity seems to be rapidly closing. We simply cannot afford to let that happen.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Šimonović for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Murmokaite (Lithuania): I thank you, Sir, for having convened today's meeting. I would also like to thank the three briefers for their valuable and sobering contributions. It is hard to disagree with the statements made by Under-Secretary-General Feltman and Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović that the window of opportunity is very small and may be closing very fast.

Following the diplomatic efforts in the Normandy format aimed at finding a solution to the Ukrainian conflict, a package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements of 5 and 19 September 2014 was agreed upon on 12 February. The Security Council put its weight behind th0se agreements by adopting resolution 2202 (2014), on 17 February.

Since then, some positive developments have taken place, including the initial exchange of prisoners and a significant reduction in the death toll. However, further steps are urgently needed. All illegally detained persons must be released, including the Ukrainian pilot Nadiya Savchenko, who spent more than 80 days on a hunger strike and whose health is close to a point of no return.

Serious concerns remain regarding the verification of the withdrawal of heavy weaponry and continuing instances of ceasefire violations, including near Mariupol and Donetsk airport.

We note the assessment by the Special Monitoring Mission that attacks on Government-controlled towns east of Mariupol may indicate an attempt to test the eastern defences of the city. We stress that any attempts by the Russia-backed militants to seek to gain control of additional territory will be a clear breach of the Minsk agreements and will seriously undermine all efforts to promote a sustainable political solution.

Monitors of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) continue to face severe restrictions. Russia-backed armed groups continue to deny access, including to Shyrokyne and Kruzhylivka; they also continue to harass and threaten the personnel of the Special Monitoring Mission. That is clearly unacceptable and a violation of the Minsk agreements and their implementation measures.

The OSCE Mission has not been provided with the requested detailed information, including the inventory of weapons, withdrawal routes and concentrations points, as per the Minsk agreements. Valid questions therefore remain regarding whether the illegal militants are withdrawing their weaponry or merely regrouping under the guise of doing so.

The situation is further aggravated by the fact that OSCE border-monitoring activities remain restricted to 40 metres out of some 400 kilometres. As we know, Russia has repeatedly blocked efforts to expand border monitoring.

It is paramount that Russia stop destabilizing the situation in eastern Ukraine and stop supporting illegal armed groups operating there. Its soldiers must be withdrawn from the territory of Ukraine. It must put an end to the movement of mercenaries across its borders into Ukrainian territory and stop support to the illegal militants. Russia should also use its influence with the illegal armed groups to ensure that the ceasefire is fully and unconditionally respected and that the withdrawal of the heavy weapons can be duly monitored.

The OSCE Monitoring Mission should be provided full and unhindered access to all areas. It must be able to exercise its mandate independently, without obstruction or interference. We look forward to the early extension of the Mission's mandate for a 12-month period. Adequate financing and resourcing must be ensured for the Mission to carry out its mandate.

Civilians have borne the brunt of this conflict, which started a year ago with the illegal annexation of Crimea in blatant breach of the Charter of the United Nations. The false pretext of defending the rights of Russian speakers was used to invade Crimea and promote separatism in eastern Ukraine. While fighting imagined human rights violations, Russia and the illegal militants it supports have caused a real humanitarian crisis and real and dramatic human rights violations in the regions affected by the illegal actions.

Normal life in those regions has been disrupted, leading to displacement, destruction and deaths. The

numbers were given by John Ging of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). At least 1 million have resettled within the country, placing a heavy burden on the authorities as well as on local communities. Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović has spoken about that. The humanitarian crisis is most acute, aggravated by the cold winter. Russia and the illegal armed groups it supports bear full responsibility for the devastation that has befallen Ukraine.

We welcome the efforts of OCHA, United Nations agencies and other international organizations aimed at alleviating the suffering of the people in eastern Ukraine. It is imperative that all humanitarian actors should be provided unfettered access to all affected areas for a prompt and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian assistance should be provided in line with international law and in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty. Russia's so-called humanitarian convoys remain a cause of concern, as they are operating in violation of the accepted norms of humanitarian assistance and in breach of Ukraine's borders and sovereignty.

Reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have repeatedly documented the catastrophic breakdown of the rule of law and ongoing massive human-rights violations in the militant-held areas, including abductions, arbitrary detentions, beatings, torture and summary executions. There are also numerous instances of serious violations of international humanitarian law, to which Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović just referred. The capture and parading of Ukrainian prisoners of war by the militants constitute a possible war crime. The capture of Donetsk airport revealed bodies of executed Ukrainian servicemen with their hands tied behind their backs, as documented in the latest reports.

Attacks against journalists and media outlets continue. At least 60 cases of attacks against the media offices were recorded, and 78 journalists have been held by armed groups since March last year, according to the report. The whereabouts of some remain unknown.

The latest human rights monitoring mission report speaks eloquently of the disturbing human rights situation in occupied Crimea. The Tatar community, those who opposed the sham referendum a year ago, religious communities and minorities are facing threats, harassment, intimidation, abductions and forced disappearances.

Since the annexation by the Russian Federation, the public space in Crimea has been shrinking. The fundamental freedoms of expression and assembly have been severely curtailed. All those holding Ukrainian passports are facing restrictions in exercising their political and civil rights, limited access to social services, tight quotas for residence permits and loss of jobs and homes. Out of 600 schools that offered instruction fully in Ukrainian, not a single one remains. Only 20 schools on the peninsula have separate Ukrainian classes — violating the rights of the Ukrainian community in Crimea.

Religious communities have also been affected. Priests, imams and representatives of other religious communities are being threatened with prosecution, detained and harassed, with their prayer houses and monuments desecrated. People are forced to adopt Russian citizenship or lose their property, rights and income.

Crimean Tatars are in an especially serious condition, as they have no other home but Crimea. Their leaders are evicted from the Mejlis, threatened, prosecuted and deported. Major figures, such as Mustafa Jemilev and Refat Chubarov, have been barred from re-entering Crimea. The Deputy Chairman Ahtem Ciygoz is being detained along with a number of other activists. A number of activists are still missing after being abducted as early as May last year. The son the Crimean Tatar leader Jemilev remains in detention in the Russian Federation under trumped up charges.

Media freedom is under siege in Crimea. The broadcasting of the Ukrainian television channels and Ukrainian Internet have been discontinued. Journalists have been threatened, assaulted and attacked. Investigations have been invoked against the Crimean Tatar newspapers.

In spite of Russia's allegations to the contrary and in spite of the extremely difficult circumstances, the Ukrainian authorities are continuing the necessary reform processes. We welcome the Ukrainian President's decree on setting up a constitutional commission, establishing a national council for reform, creating an anti-corruption agency and drafting a national human-rights strategy, which speaks to the Government's commitment to human rights for all. Those efforts must be wholeheartedly encouraged and supported. The Ukrainian people deserve to have reforms put in place expeditiously and effectively. The Maidan events were

not about extremism, as some continue to allege. It was about the passionate desire of the Ukrainian people for reform and for a clear break with a past marked by abuses, corruption, cronyism and graft.

It is also imperative to address the issue of impunity for serious crimes and human-rights violations, including in Crimea and the militant-held areas, which have seen pervasive lawlessness and a total breakdown of accountability. All perpetrators of the most serious crimes, including the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17, must be held to account. We call on the Ukrainian authorities to do their utmost in that regard. We also urge Ukraine to complete its accession to the Rome Statute. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that no amnesty should be granted for international crimes, including gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation for the engagement in Ukraine of the United Nations and its agencies, and of the OSCE. We look forward to continued reporting, including the spot reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on human rights in Ukraine, including Crimea. The United Nations, the OSCE and their missions should be given full and unhindered access to all areas in Ukraine, including Crimea. The international community, United Nations agencies and humanitarian actors must step up their efforts to help Ukraine cope with the enormous challenges posed by this year-long foreign-sponsored conflict.

The key to the stabilization of the situation in eastern Ukraine lies in the full implementation of the September 2014 Minsk agreements, as reaffirmed on 12 February. The people of Ukraine have heard enough talk from the international community. The time has come to walk the walk. Russia has caused and sponsored this war, and it remains in Russia's hands to put an end to it by fully and unconditionally abiding by the Minsk agreements, and using its influence on the illegal militants to do the same. Ukraine's political independence, unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity are non-negotiable, and must be respected by all members of the international community without exception.

Ms. Power (United States of America): We continue to believe that compliance with the September Minsk agreements and the February implementation package provides a road map to peace in Ukraine. For the first time since the Minsk implementation package was signed, on 12 February, we have seen a reduction in violence. Of course, no one forgets that Russia and the separatists they have trained, armed, directed and fought alongside started violating their commitments under the package from the first minutes and hours after the deal was signed, by laying siege to Debaltseve, a city dozens of kilometres beyond the contact line, with their deadly and indiscriminate pummelling. Violations started on day one, and violations of the ceasefire continue in a number of places, particularly outside Mariupol, where Russian-backed separatists have engaged in intense fighting, attacking the village of Shyrokyne in recent days.

Unfortunately, although the violence has decreased, there has been only partial compliance with the Minsk implementation package. As the members of the Council know, the package calls for "an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire", not a gradual and partial reduction of fire. It does not say that Russian-backed separatists can continue to shell, engage in sniper fire or use barrel and rocket artillery; yet they have carried attacks using all such methods in recent days. Since 20 February, Russian separatist attacks such as those have killed 15 Ukrainian military personnel and wounded nearly 100 more.

A second condition in the Minsk implementation package is full, unfettered access to the entire conflict zone for monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). While there have been occasional instances when the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission has been stopped at Ukrainian checkpoints, the restrictions placed on the Mission by Russia and the separatists are documented as widespread. Just as Russia and Russian-backed separatists prevented the Mission from going to Debaltseve while those forces carried out their vicious attack, recent Mission reports chronicle repeated, persistent obstruction from Russian-backed separatists — obstruction that includes even threatening to kill OSCE monitors. To date, the separatists have granted the monitors sporadic access, limited to certain roads when and where it suits them. As we have asked before, the question bears asking again: who obstructs an objective observer other than someone who has something to hide from an unbiased eye?

The Minsk implementation package also calls for a full pull-back of all heavy weapons. That, too, has not happened. Shortly after the package was signed, the

OSCE's chief monitor sent a letter to all the signatories requesting that they provide information on what heavy weapons were present in eastern Ukraine, where they were, which routes would be used to withdraw them and where they would be located after being withdrawn. Russia has not replied, as though if it pretends it has no heavy weapons in Ukraine, we will forget all the tanks, GRAD missiles and other heavy weapons we have watched Russia send across the border. All signatories to the Minsk agreements and the implementation package — Ukraine, on the one side, and Russia and the so-called Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic, on the other — are responsible for pulling back heavy weapons. The OSCE must have unfettered, unconditional access in order to verify the withdrawal. Two days ago, Russia sent its seventeenth so-called humanitarian convoy into Ukraine, once again denying international observers and Ukrainian border guards the right to conduct a full and complete inspection of its contents. Russian convoys, which should be coming out of Ukraine, are instead going in. If those convoys are carrying humanitarian assistance, why not allow a full inspection?

The ceasefire weapons pull-back and OSCE verification, neither of which is complete, are among just the immediate steps to be taken in the implementation package. In addition to that, all of the Minsk agreements to date have called for the release of all hostages by all sides. Nadiya Savchenko and other Ukrainians being held in Russia are hostages, just as surely as are those being kept in basements in Donetsk and Luhansk. Again, we call on Russia to release Nadiya Savchenko, who has been on hunger strike for more than 80 days, as well as her Ukrainian counterparts. That is something Russia can do today.

As we have seen before, the separatists have an established track record of using a lull in the fighting to regroup, re-arm and re-supply. Russia supports that process by providing an unlimited supply of guns and weaponry. The United States, and the rest of the world, hopes that will not be the case this time. We are carefully watching what happens in Shyrokyne, a town just east of the strategic port city of Mariupol, which many fear will be the next target of the separatists and Russian military.

The devastating consequences of this conflict have been brought into sharp relief by the most recent report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. More than 1.7 million people have been displaced and more than 5,800 killed — a casualty count that does not include the hundreds of bodies found after Russian-backed separatists finished their deadly siege of Debaltseve. A report from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs at the end of last month stated that 500 bodies had been found in houses and basements at the end of the siege — 500 bodies. Homes and basements where people took shelter from the endless barrage of Russian-made mortars and rockets as they rained down on the city's residents, who could not escape. Weeks into the siege, at the end of January, the self-declared leader of the Russian-backed separatists announced that anybody who left would be in the interlocking field of fire of their artillery. From that day, he said, the road would be under fire. Those inside were therefore left with a choice between risking their lives by staying or risking their lives by leaving. Civilians were killed doing both, and, I repeat, 500 bodies were found in homes and basements where people had taken shelter.

The casualties and the displaced are one of the devastating consequences of this conflict. Another, and one we rarely speak about in the Council any more, is the ongoing illegal occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea by a permanent member of the Council. Crimea is important not only because it constitutes a continued violation of the territorial integrity of a sovereign nation — a violation orchestrated in Moscow and dressed up in a sham referendum — but also because it offers a preview of the kind of rule we can expect in the other parts of Ukraine seized by those who see themselves as part of Novorossiya.

Let me give just one example of what it is like to live in that world, from a long list of repressive practices documented in the aforementioned February human-rights report of the United Nations, part of the relentless persecution of the Crimean Muslim Tatar minority. According to the report, on 29 January 2015, the de facto authorities arrested Ahtem Ciygoz, the Deputy Chairman of the Tatar Mejlis, the Tatars' representative council. He was charged, under the Russian criminal code, with having participated in a "mass disturbance" for protesting against what was then the imminent Russian occupation, which ended in a clash with pro-Russian demonstrators. On 7 February, another Crimean Tatar was detained on the same charges. Both men are charged with violating Russian law, even though Russian law had not even taken effect at the time that they participated in the protest.

Yesterday the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media released a statement saying that media freedom in Crimea was at an all time low. Among other violations, she reported that,

"Journalists from at least 13 independent media outlets, free lance journalists and bloggers have been threatened, assaulted, physically attacked, banned from entry, interrogated and kidnapped; their equipment confiscated or damaged."

The Russian Federation occupies territory, unilaterally attempts to annex it and then retroactively and arbitrarily applies its laws to those who dared to question its take-over as it was occurring. It does not get much more Orwellian than that. As anyone who has read the human rights report knows, that is just one in a long list of repressive tactics, including torture, enforced disappearances and targeted political killings that have defined Russia's occupation.

It is to avoid an Orwellian world like that, where we talk of peace while undermining it, that we must ensure that the Minsk agreements are implemented. The Council members around this table must confront the situation on the ground as it exists, rather than as we wish it were. Peace will not come from more words, and there have been so many words in this Chamber. It will come from the long-awaited and faithful implementation of the many agreements that have been entered into, and renewed respect for the territorial integrity of a State Member of the United Nations.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The last three speakers employed 50 shades of black. We would like to call on everyone to be more objective, which is in the interest of settling the conflict. However, we understand that in this case such appeals are useless.

We are grateful to Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman and to the Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Ging, for their briefings.

With regard to Mr. Ivan Šimonović, we believe that his briefing to the Security Council is inappropriate for several reasons. First, the Council has not taken a decision to establish the human rights mission in Ukraine and had not asked for a reporting line. Secondly, Mr. Šimonović already had an opportunity, just a few days ago, to address the Human Rights Council in Geneva and to convey his views to Member States. This is a classic example of a duplication of effort in the United Nations. Previous appearances by Mr. Šimonović the Security Council have led only to an excessive politicization of the issue. Objectivity was sacrificed to propaganda. It has reached the point where the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has begun to express its views on military aspects that have nothing to do with human rights issues. That is why today we will not comment on Mr. Šimonović's report or on his briefing. We have already done so in Human Rights Council.

On 17 February, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2202 (2015), which approves a package of measures aimed at implementing the Minsk agreements, which established a framework for peaceful settlement and a way to address the conflict in the Council. The package of measures of 12 February raised the bar for the settlement of the conflict to a more advanced stage, and it became a kind of new affirmation of the process. The document provides a comprehensive approach — from military issues to confidence-building measures — and includes constitutional reform, which should be carried out in consultation with Donetsk and Luhansk.

There are also a number of other important elements, including amnesty for participants, the restoration of socioeconomic relations and humanitarian aspects. Now, thanks to resolution 2202 (2015), everything has been reinforced by the international authority of the Security Council, which in addition to the leaders of the Normandy quartet, has become a guarantor of the package of measures. The document is clear, both with regard to the sequence of the steps to be taken and the participants that must take those steps. In that regard, it is important to act in good faith and implement the steps without any attempt to rewrite them.

The Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) plays a crucial role in implementing the package of measures. It is tasked with observing the process, in accordance with the parameters prescribed in the document, in an impartial and coordinated way. If the special monitoring mission needs strengthening with more observers, equipment or financing, we are ready to consider that in a more constructive manner and in more detail in the framework of the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna.

Being both realists and optimists, we are satisfied with the positive development of the situation on the ground. The ceasefire is generally holding. The withdrawal of heavy weapons has begun. One of the parties to the conflict, the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, has already completed that process. We hope that Kyiv will fall in line and finally withdraw its heavy equipment to the line of contact. We hope that this will help to foster a climate of trust, and that isolated violations of the ceasefire will cease. We also note the progress made in the exchange of prisoners.

At the same time, progress has stalled on a number of points. On 24 February in Paris, Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Normandy quartet called on the Trilateral Contact Group to immediately establish a working group to address the remaining aspects. Unfortunately, Ukrainian authorities refuse to do that and are dragging their feet. That is alarming and counterproductive. On 3 March, after having delayed for several months, President Poroshenko signed a decree establishing a constitutional commission, which will draft changes to the Constitution. However, the process is far from transparent. According to the package of measures, constitutional reform must be carried out in coordination with representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk. Otherwise, the deep-rooted causes of the Ukrainian crisis will not be dealt with.

A separate issue is the catastrophic socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in Donbas. The measures taken by Kyiv to suffocate the south-east have become a veritable blockade. Social benefits and pensions paid to Donbas residents have been cut off. Exiting and entering the area requires overcoming almost insurmountable bureaucratic obstacles. Convoys with humanitarian assistance and food are not reaching civilians, as confirmed by international organizations. Dozens of hospitals and schools have been destroyed. Kyiv recently ended the delivery of gas to Donbas.

Russia is undertaking extensive efforts to meet the urgent needs of the population of Donbas. It has already 17 sent convoys with humanitarian assistance. By the way, the most recent convoy, as well as some previous ones, was fully inspected by Ukrainian customs officials at the Donetsk checkpoint. I would ask Ambassador Power to take an interest in what her Embassies in Kyiv and Moscow are doing and in why they are not providing her with such basic information, instead giving her with disinformation on this topic and many other issues related to Ukraine.

Thanks to the humanitarian convoys approximately 30,000 people are being provided with food rations, 250 hospitals are receiving medical equipment and approximately 150 social service facilities have been reopened. Drinking water is being provided to 80 per cent of the population in the affected areas. We believe it is unfounded and cynically politicized to criticize us for sending those convoys. That criticism will in no way undermine our determination to help the people of Donbas.

The statistics about the 1 million internally displaced persons in the territory of Ukraine is well known. However, almost as many people — 950,000 people since April 2014 — have left Ukraine and stayed in Russia. Of them more than 650,000 have requested to be granted special status. We make no distinction as to whether those people come from the east or the west of Ukraine or as to what their political views are. We are making comprehensive efforts to welcome them and provide them housing and jobs. There are some 527 temporary accommodation sites throughout 76 regions of the Russian Federation where more than 27,000 people, including nearly 9,000 children, are currently residing. Those people are being provided with humanitarian, medical and psychological support.

In the medium term, the socioeconomic problems of Donbas cannot be resolved without implementing the provisions of the package of measures pertaining to the full re-establishment of relations with the rest of Ukraine, including the resumption of transfers of social benefits and pension payments and the functioning of the banking system. That work must begin without delay in the framework of the Contact Group.

We have heard dozens of times in this Chamber that the Ukrainian crisis can be resolved only through political means. Today the main work is being carried out in the Normandy and Minsk formats, which are making an important contribution to achieving results that give us hope for a solution. However, against the backdrop of positive steps, we are very worried about the continuing sabre-rattling by Kyiv — statements by President Poroshenko about the expansion of the army, the delivery of a new batch of tanks to the National Guard and the armed forces, trips by Kyiv officials around the world looking for weapons, and the drafting in the United States Congress of a law to provide

$1 billion for the equipping and training of Ukrainian forces.

According to data we have, in Lviv oblast these days some 300 military personnel from the United States have arrived to train Ukrainian soldiers in the use of foreign equipment. Everyone knows that wherever American military appear bad things can be expected to happen. I just want to recall, for instance, that when the Saakashvili regime attacked South Ossetia, there were 127 United States military advisers working in Georgia. The result was conflict, bloodshed and destruction. Only irresponsible politicians refuse to understand what this kind of a scenario could lead to in Ukraine.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman, Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović and Director Ging for their timely briefings today.

We share the briefers' grave concern at the situation in eastern Ukraine. This week the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that more than 6,000 people have been killed since April 2014. In that time, over 15,000 people have been wounded, and more than 1.5 million have fled their homes. It should trouble us all that these grim milestones have been met in less than one year and in spite of successive ceasefires.

Behind those statistics lies a worrying and escalating humanitarian crisis that has further undermined the human rights of all those living in eastern Ukraine. I can understand why the representative of Russia does not want to discuss the human rights situation in the country because the latest report by the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine details a growing level of violations and abuse, including reports of arbitrary arrests, summary executions, torture and enforced disappearances. The report details indiscriminate shelling of populated areas, including deliberate attacks by Russian-backed separatists on civilians being evacuated through Ukrainian-controlled routes, and it highlights the human cost of the fighting — overburdened centres for internally displaced persons, collapsing social services and a growing scarcity of food, water and heating.

The violence is having a disproportionate effect on the most vulnerable, with women, children and the elderly increasingly caught up in the fighting. Thousands remain trapped in volatile locations like Debaltseve. Hospitals, schools and kindergartens have been deliberately shelled, and disturbing reports of sexual violence are on the rise.

We call on both sides to respect international law, to ensure the safety and security of all in the region and to take active steps to ensure accountability for any violations and abuses of human rights. Sadly, investigations have been hindered by the separatists' refusal to grant access to the territory they control. We urge Russia to use its influence to overcome that situation.

More must also be done, as agreed in Minsk on 12 February, to ensure the exchange of all hostages and unlawfully detained persons who remain in captivity. That includes Ukrainian pilot Nadiya Savchenko, being held in solitary confinement, who has been on an extended hunger strike. Recent reports indicate that she has had to suspend her hunger strike after 83 days without food amid serious concerns for her health. As part of the agreement, Russia committed to releasing all prisoners, and yet Ms. Savchenko and many others remain in captivity. That is a clear violation of the Minsk agreements. I would like to ask the Russian representative here today to explain to the Security Council why Ms. Savchenko is still being held. I would also like to remind the Russian Federation authorities that while Ms. Savchenko remains in their custody they are fully responsible for her health and well-being.

One year on from the illegal annexation of Crimea, we must be clear in our condemnation today of what the United Nations describes as "systematic human rights violations affecting mostly Crimean Tatars and those who opposed the March 'referendum'". The report details arrests, arbitrary detention and deportation of Crimean Tatar activists, denying them their freedom of religion and belief, their right to free expression and their right to peaceful assembly. The continued denial of access to Crimea to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities is of particular concern.

We must send a united message today on the issue of access. The Minsk agreement calls for the safe delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need. It calls for the OSCE to observe the withdrawal of heavy weapons, the border and the ceasefire. None of that can be achieved unless the Russian-backed separatists grant free and

unfettered access to the territory they control. We welcome Ukrainian President Poroshenko's statement this week that the OSCE will be granted access by the separatists to 10 locations in the east. I look forward to Russia's confirmation that it will be support this commitment and that it will use all its influence to improve access for humanitarian deliveries.

Russian so-called humanitarian convoys remain of grave concern. Some are clearly being used as cover for the delivery of military supplies. Russian military hardware remains in eastern Ukraine despite the agreement at Minsk to withdraw foreign military formations. The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine details credible reports of

> "a continuing influx of heavy and sophisticated weaponry to armed groups in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as foreign fighters, including from the Russian Federation."

The OSCE reported on Wednesday that an 83-vehicle convoy crossed the border from Russia at Donetsk. The Ukrainian Government has made clear that it has not authorized such convoys. They are therefore a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and of international law.

Should Russia wish to support the humanitarian effort, I urge it to donate money to the United Nations aid programme. Unless Russia changes its approach, we will have no choice but to maintain sanctions and continue our condemnation of Russia's flagrant disregard for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and the human rights of its people.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman, Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović and Mr. Ging, Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings.

In recent days, the overall situation in eastern Ukraine has been stable, and the ceasefire has largely been maintained. Not long ago, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2202 (2015), reflecting the firm support of the international community for the diplomatic efforts of the leaders of the Russian Federation, France, Germany and Ukraine and for a political settlement of the question of Ukraine. The top priority now is for the parties concerned to continue to implement in a comprehensive manner the 12 February Minsk agreement reached by the leaders of the Russian Federation, France, Germany and Ukraine and advance the process of political settlement.

China is against any gross violation of human rights in Ukraine and any act that causes the deterioration of the humanitarian situation of the country. We also believe that a political solution is the only way to resolve the question of Ukraine.

The question of Ukraine involves multiple complex and interwoven historical and contemporary issues; a comprehensive long-term solution requires a full accommodation of the legitimate rights, interests and claims of the various regions and ethnic groups in Ukraine, addressing the legitimate concerns of the parties concerned and achieving a balance in the parties' interests. The international community should continue to increase diplomatic efforts to push for a political settlement of the crisis in Ukraine.

In terms of the Council's discussion on the question of Ukraine, China takes an open approach. We believe that the discussion should play a constructive role in easing tensions in the country. Moreover, the threat or use of unilateral sanctions all too often in international relations is not conducive to finding a fundamental solution.

Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries has been China's consistent position. China's position on the question of Ukraine has been objective and impartial.

We welcome and support the Minsk agreements reached by the leaders of the Russian Federation, France, Germany and Ukraine. We call on the parties concerned to continue to make efforts to ease the situation in eastern Ukraine, with a view to achieving peace, tranquility, stability and development in Ukraine. China is willing to continue to play a constructive role towards a political settlement of the question of Ukraine.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Mr. John Ging, Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their comprehensive briefings.

The crisis in Ukraine has created an extremely difficult humanitarian situation for Ukrainians. Thousands have been forced from their homes and into exile in other areas. Furthermore, more than 1 million people in Ukraine are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. We are therefore compelled to achieve a positive, peaceful settlement that takes into account the interests of all parties puts an end to military actions. Those actions, in addition to other security challenges, continue to hamper the work of humanitarian organizations and stability in Ukraine.

Jordan is increasingly concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine, including the effects of the random shelling of civilian areas. In the current situation, the first priority must be the protection of civilians, mitigating their suffering through urgent measures to assist displaced persons and Ukrainian refugees and supporting basic services, particularly in the health sector, which has suffered enormously as a result of the crisis in Ukraine.

Furthermore, pressure must be brought to bear on the parties to the conflict, particularly the separatists, to compel them to respect the rules of international humanitarian law and human rights law and to cease all violations thereof. The current divisions among Ukrainians as a result of such violations and breaches may lead to a point of no return in the matter of Ukraine. That serves the interest of no party whatsoever and would have long-term negative effects on security and stability in the region.

Jordan appreciates the limited improvement in the security situation in eastern Ukraine and the ceasefire being respected in some regions. We stress the need for an end to all confrontation in eastern Ukraine. In that regard, we emphasize the need for all parties must uphold their responsibilities under the Minsk agreements and translate those agreements into facts on the ground.

My country underscores the importance of the ongoing meetings under the Normandy format in order to implement the agreements, including a full ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weaponry and the completion of prisoner exchanges, through cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the working groups to be set up by the Trilateral Contact Group. We consider it necessary to to make additional efforts at this crucial stage aimed at resolving the crisis in Ukraine, especially in the light of the building blocks available to make progress on a political solution.

Jordan supports the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other international humanitarian organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross. We call on all parties to lift all obstacles in order to ensure access by those organizations to the areas requiring assistance.

Furthermore, we urge support for the strategic response plan for 2015 set forth by OCHA to ensure humanitarian assistance to the people in need. We stress that such organizations will be unable to carry out their humanitarian work without proper political support from all of the parties to the conflict, in addition to the necessary international financial support for such assistance. We call on the Government of Ukraine to continue implementing the human rights strategy it has developed and to continue drafting the legislation necessary to protect all of its citizens.

In conclusion, Jordan believes that the current positive environment must be used to advantage, following last month's Minsk meeting. We must ensure the space for a comprehensive political solution in Ukraine that serve to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity and bring together all parts of Ukrainian society.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman for keeping us updated on the political situation in Ukraine. We also thank Mr. John Ging and Mr. Ivan Šimonović for their briefings on the humanitarian situation in the country.

I would like to begin by deploring the death of four demonstrators as the result of a remotely detonated device, on 22 February in Kharkiv. We hope that terrorism will not spread. Ukraine is a country that has already suffered greatly; it needs to rebuild a peaceful society in which its citizens will not have to fear for their lives or well-being. In that connection, we were pleased to hear that, since the signing of the Minsk agreements, there has been a decrease in tensions in Ukraine and progress has been achieved — for example, on prisoner exchanges between the parties.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to begin to speak of a political solution when we know that, since the ceasefire entered into force on 15 February, 60 Ukrainian

soldiers and an unknown number of separatists and civilians have died. Indeed, confrontations persist in some regions of the country. We once again urge the parties to fully implement the ceasefire.

According to the package of measures adopted on 12 February, the deadline for the withdrawal of heavy weaponry will expire tomorrow, 7 March. That process was developed with limited access by the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Chile believes that the process must be transparent and that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine must be given an inventory of the weapons in the country and full access to information on the withdrawal so that it can play its full role in monitoring the ceasefire and the arms stockpiles.

Despite those difficulties, it will be able to manage this phase without major setbacks, in accordance with the programme established in the package of measures, which should not interfere with the establishment of working groups and the finding of a political solution to the conflict. We are also concerned that access was not given to a United Nations rescue team following a methane explosion in a Donetsk mine. We stress the fact that access to humanitarian and emergency support must be unrestricted throughout the territory of Ukraine, and the authorities must ensure the protection of the entire Ukrainian population.

It is necessary to put a clear end to the confrontation so that the international community and the Government of Ukraine can concentrate their efforts and resources on dealing with the humanitarian and economic crisis. Ukraine will need all the help it can get in addressing the humanitarian crisis, which has left more than 1 million people displaced. The Government must find lasting solutions for the provision of housing, employment and social services and the integration of those people who, because of the conflict, will not be able to return to their places of origin. In that vein, we are pleased that the international community is supporting the Government's reform programme, and we hope that it will continue to support the implementation of the necessary changes.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to thank Mr. Feltman, Mr. Šimonović and Mr. Ging for their briefings and express my gratitude to the delegation of Lithuania for having called for this meeting. I would like to particularly thank Lithuania because Spain is very supportive of the Security Council's role in closely monitoring the implementation of the Minsk agreement on the basis of resolution 2202 (2015). All of us here agree that the conflict in Ukraine can be resolved only by political means. The Minsk accord, facilitated by Germany and France, to which the parties agreed and which was endorsed by the Security Council, can serve as a tool for us to achieve a solution. We need to support it in a decisive, and unanimous way.

A new high-level meeting of the participants in the Normandy format is convening today in Berlin, with Ambassadors Tagliavini and Apakan in attendance on behalf of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in order to continue providing assistance aimed at advancing the process. The Security Council should also support that process. Spain welcomes the progress achieved in the first few weeks after the entry into force of the ceasefire agreement, including the first steps in the withdrawal of heavy weapons and the exchange of prisoners.

However, progress remains weak and inadequate, as clearly described by Under-Secretary-General Feltman. I believe, as he does, that we really need to take advantage of this window of opportunity. We urge respect for the ceasefire, without exception and pursuant to the agreed conditions, and the implementation of the other provisions of the Minsk agreement in a uniform and condition-free manner. We also appeal to Russia to use all its influence to demand that the rebel groups immediately and strictly implement the agreements and thereby comply with its obligations as a signatory of the Minsk agreement. We also call on Ukraine to continue moving forward in fulfilling the obligations undertaken in Minsk, including the non-military aspects of the agreement.

We are concerned about the difficulties that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine continues to face in fulfilling the tasks entrusted to it under the agreement. We therefore urge the parties to work together with the Mission and to provide it forthwith with the full information it requires. In recent days, the Council has repeatedly expressed its support for the important role that the OSCE plays. I think that we must stress the importance of the agreement. Spain has proposed extending the mandate of the Special Monitoring Mission and providing it with the necessary human and material resources.

We have heard with great concern the description of the humanitarian situation reported by Mr. Ging. Assistance to the population in need should be a top priority for everyone. We need to reject the politicization and exploitation of the situation. The effective distribution of humanitarian assistance should be a common goal that should be implemented in a coordinated way and not unilaterally. I appeal specifically to Russia to ensure the effective distribution of aid and the due observance of international law and the necessary restoration of trust between the parties and to coordinate its humanitarian assistance with the Ukrainian authorities and the competent international authorities. Spain suggests that we consider the possibility of setting up a specific mechanism that would make it possible, perhaps with the support of independent humanitarian actors, to facilitate and accelerate the delivery of aid to those in need with full respect for humanitarian principles.

We have also listened intently and with great concern to Mr. Šimonović's briefing. We again see the dramatic impact of the conflict in terms of its undermining human rights and international humanitarian law. That has been particularly severe since January in the areas under the control of rebel groups. On that point, I would like to express, as have other delegations, a special thought for Nadiya Savchenko, whose hunger strike is of great concern to us. We request that she be released immediately.

Also of particular concern is the description of the situation in the autonomous republic of Crimea. Its population, according to the report, is subject to systematic violations of its rights, especially those people who belong to the Tatar community. Spain would like to recall the content of General Assembly resolution 68/262. The report submitted by Mr. Šimonović recalls that the implementation of the laws of the Russian Federation in respect of the population of Crimea not only contravenes that resolution but also has certain implications that negatively impact human rights. Any lasting and sustainable solution must be based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman, Director John Ging of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Assistant Secretary-General Ivan Šimonović for their briefings illustrating the political and diplomatic developments aimed at putting an end to the conflict in Ukraine, as well as the situation on the ground, the ceasefire agreed to in Minsk, the dire humanitarian situation endured by the Ukrainians and the alarming human rights situation facing the country.

As a matter of principle, Angola supports the peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue and negotiations, strict adherence to the principles of international law, and respect for the sovereignty, independence, non-interference and territorial integrity of all States. Angola reiterates its full support for the implementation of the package of measures agreed to in Minsk on 12 February. We believe that a permanent ceasefire will allow for the overall implementation of the Minsk agreement and ultimately, the establishment of peace in Ukraine.

We are deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine, where over all, since the beginning of the conflict in mid-April 2014, almost 6,000 people have been killed and almost 15,000 wounded. We regret that over 1 million people are reported to be internally displaced. This is a situation that must stop and the Ukrainian people must be allowed to live with one another in peace and security.

We call once again on the parties to the conflict to respect the ceasefire and to implement speedily and in good faith the package of measures under the Minsk agreements. Having been endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 2202 (2015), the agreement carries special weight resulting from the Council's authority in matters pertaining to international peace and security. In addition, the agreements' endorsement by the Council's unanimous adoption of that resolution confers additional responsibilities on the Council and on the parties to the conflict to enforce the ceasefire and the Minsk agreements.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on presiding over the work of the Security Council during the month of March. You may count on the full cooperation of my delegation in the pursuit of the objectives inherent to the Council's work. We also thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr. Ivan Šimonović, and the Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Ging, for their briefings.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela optimistically notes that the prospects for a political solution in Ukraine have continued to grow, especially following the adoption of resolution 2202 (2015) by the Security Council in support of the decision agreed by the representatives of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany on 12 February in Minsk. We underscore the need for the agreements to receive the support of the international community. We firmly hope that the parties will respect the ceasefire so that the agreements can be fully implemented.

We would like to express our concern regarding the more than 6,000 deaths, 14,740 wounded and 1 million internally displaced persons that have been reported, as well as the fragile situation in which civilians find themselves in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk. We therefore reiterate the need for the parties strictly to observe what was agreed in Minsk on 12 February regarding the protection of civilians and to support a process addressing the humanitarian situation. We reiterate our rejection of violence, ethnic and political persecution, and any form of terrorist act, by whosoever committed and for whatsoever motivation. We call on the parties to refrain from actions that threaten the aspirations for peace and stability of the populations affected by the conflict.

Venezuela supports the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and welcomes the work being carried out by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to support the effective implementation of the Minsk agreements, including the withdrawal of heavy weaponry by the parties concerned, which has already begun, as stated Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan, head of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine on 27 February.

Without a doubt, the human rights situation throughout the region is cause for concern. And while that is the focus of our discussion at this meeting, I cannot fail to stress the importance of seeking a political and diplomatic solution to the conflict. The Security Council must therefore support the effective implementation of resolution 2202 (2015) and the full implementation of the Minsk agreements of 12 February in an impartial and transparent manner and without ulterior motives.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): I thank Mr. Feltman, Mr. Ging and Mr. Šimonović for their excellent briefings, which only serve to emphasize that, if the Security Council is to perform its role of scrutinizing the situation in Ukraine, it must continue to receive regular and reliable information, such as that which we have just heard. We also compliment Lithuania for its initiative in requesting those briefings.

What we now know about the human rights situation in Ukraine is truly distressing, in particular the reports of severe violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including the indiscriminate shelling of civilians, which New Zealand has previously condemned, and does so again today. Vulnerable populations are subject to grave abuses; they strive just to maintain a precarious existence, all the while seeking safety. We think, in particular, of the plight of the disabled, who are often overlooked in these situations. Moreover, today there are 1 million displaced persons in Ukraine; 12 months ago, there were none. There are 5 million in need of humanitarian relief; 12 months ago, there were none.

A sharp increase in casualties coincided with the dramatic escalation of hostilities of recent months, the only mitigating factor being that the worst reports generally predate the ceasefire recently agreed in Minsk. While there are indications that the situation has started to improve since that ceasefire, we as the Security Council must do everything possible to maintain that momentum. We must in particular address the gaps in information referred to by Under-Secretary-General Feltman, and we must, to use his words, make the process irreversible. We can only hope that the events of late 2014 and the early part of this year represent the lowest point of the humanitarian and human rights situation in Ukraine.

In the February open debate on the topic (see S/PV.7389), my Minister of Foreign Affairs raised New Zealand's concerns about the veto. We were not alone in that, with some Member States also mentioning paragraph 3 of Article 27 of the Charter of the United Nations. Without repeating those comments, New Zealand emphasizes that, where parties to a conflict know that the Security Council is unable to act, there is much less incentive for compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law. We see the sad reality of that every day in Ukraine.

New Zealand urges those involved in this conflict to deliver on their Minsk commitments, not least with a genuine and comprehensive ceasefire. Until that has been achieved, the humanitarian crisis and the violations

that have been described to us today will persist, more people will suffer, more blood will be shed, and more lives will be lost. Under international human rights law, all parties have an obligation to ensure that civilians are protected. Where civilians seek to escape conflict areas so as to get to safety, they must be allowed to do so, not be trapped as Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović described to us, and certainly not threatened by separatist artillery. Humanitarian aid must reach the affected populations. All involved must do everything within their power to ensure its delivery without let or hindrance. International norms on the protection of humanitarian actors must also be respected.

As we have just heard that the situation for ordinary people in Ukraine remains very dangerous indeed. The observation of the ceasefire remains imperfect. Significant civilian populations remain at very high risk. Much is needed to ensure their safety and to protect them from human-rights violations. New Zealand reiterates the Security Council's recent unanimous call for the full implementation of the Minsk package, including a comprehensive ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons. All of this must be monitored and verified by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We also call once again on Russia, as a party to the Minsk agreements on the ceasefire and with indisputable influence in this matter, to ensure that the separatists honour that which has been agreed. Those are the essential steps on the path to a long-term political solution and to the restoration of peace in Ukraine, and, as such, they must be delivered.

Mr. Gombo (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I thank Lithuania for taking the initiative to hold this debate on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. I would also like to thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Mr. John Ging, Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, for their briefings.

Chad is very concerned about the grave security and humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine, despite the recent calm that has prevailed following the signing of the 12 February agreements.

The fighting and blind bombings between the Government and the separatist groups have primarily affected the civilian population. The report on human rights in Ukraine covering the period from 1 December 2013 to 15 February 2014 states that 1,012 people were killed and 3,793 injured in the fighting in eastern Ukraine. In total, from April 2014 to February 2015, the conflict has caused 6,000 deaths, including 375 women and 63 children, and over 14,000 injured, including 650 women and 150 children. The conflict has also resulted in over a million internally displaced persons and refugees, including thousands of vulnerable people, in particular elderly and handicapped persons found in the combat zones without access to humanitarian aid. In addition, there has been a massive destruction of public and private infrastructure, including schools, health centres and homes.

It is a heavy toll, and the humanitarian situation highlights the responsibility of political actors and leaders to find lasting solutions for the affected populations. Such solutions must include the implementation of the Minsk agreements, including the ceasefire, the prohibition on the use of heavy weaponry and other relevant provisions of the agreements. Priority should be given to free and unhindered access to conflict areas in order to allow for the quick and non-discriminatory delivery of necessary humanitarian aid to internally displaced persons; the strengthening of evacuation measures; lasting solutions to the issues of shelter, jobs and integration for refugees; and the release of all persons detained illegally or arbitrarily; and the identification of effective measures to counter violence against women, guarantee the freedom and security of the media and put in place educational measures to allow students to pursue their studies.

Finally, the implementation of such measures must be carried out with respect for international norms and the recommendations contained in the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and in line with General Assembly resolution 68/262 on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): I thank you for convening this meeting, Mr. President. We wish to thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Mr. John Ging and Mr. Ivan Šimonović for their respective briefings.

At the outset, Malaysia would like to express its sincere condolences to the families of the victims of the coal mine accident in Zasyadko in eastern Ukraine. The incident, which resulted in dozens of casualties, has further exacerbated the already grim situation in the

Donetsk region. We call on the parties to the conflict to give full cooperation to the relevant authorities for the rescue and recovery effort.

As is normally the case, the civilian population bears the biggest brunt and pays the highest price in any conflict. The Ukraine crisis is no exception. In a matter of one year, Ukraine went from being a country without a single displaced person to one having over 1 million of its people displaced from eastern Ukraine and Crimea. Of the 1 million, 1 in 3 internally displaced people in Ukraine is a child. Currently, an estimated 5 million people in eastern Ukraine are in need of humanitarian assistance. Over 6,000 people have been killed in the conflict, including the 298 passengers on flight MH-17, a tragic incident that was a direct consequence of the Ukraine conflict.

Malaysia condemns indiscriminate attacks against civilians in the strongest terms. We are alarmed to learn that attacks that seem to intentionally target civilians in residential areas have further intensified in recent months, including in Volnovakha, Mariupol and the city of Donetsk. As reported by the human rights mission in Ukraine, the fighting and indiscriminate shelling have severely damaged civilian property and vital infrastructure, leaving civilians without electricity, gas, heating, water or food. We also condemn the attacks against hospitals, schools and kindergartens, carried out in stark disregard for international humanitarian law and civilians' lives. We repeat our call for an independent investigation into those incidents, so as to bring those responsible for gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law to justice.

Malaysia is deeply concerned by the allegations of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Ukraine. Reports of the arbitrary detentions of civilians, torture and enforced disappearances committed against both sides of the conflict must be investigated to prevent impunity. We regret the lack of progress in ensuring accountability for the grave human rights violations, such as those that occurred during the Maidan protest in Kyiv and Odessa last year.

We deplore the attacks against journalists in Ukraine, particularly in eastern Ukraine and Crimea. Over the past year, at least 78 journalists have been held by armed groups, and at least 60 attacks were carried out against media offices. We call on the parties to respect the right to the freedoms of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly. We also view with concern the targeting of religious minorities in the areas controlled by armed groups, as reported by the human rights mission in Ukraine.

Since the ceasefire went into effect on 15 February 2015, fighting has generally decreased in the Donbas region. We also welcome the progress made in the withdrawal of heavy weapons on both sides. At this point, however, the ceasefire remains fragile, and the progress made thus far is far from irreversible. We urge the parties to the conflict not to miss the opportunity for peace once again and to ensure full compliance with the provisions of the Minsk agreements. We also call on both sides to cooperate fully with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine so as to enable the mission to carry out its mandate, including to monitor and verify the ceasefire and the heavy weapons withdrawals.

Malaysia commends the tireless efforts and commitment on the part of various organizations, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to provide humanitarian assistance to those affected by the Ukraine crisis. With the ceasefire in effect, we hope attention can now be focused on intensifying humanitarian assistance in an environment that would ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. We urge all parties to allow safe and unrestricted humanitarian access and to remove bureaucratic impediments that could create barriers to deliveries of immediate and effective humanitarian aid. We reiterate our position that humanitarian assistance must be carried out in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In conclusion, we wish to reflect on the priority task facing the Chairperson of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which is to rebuild trust and confidence in Europe, in particular in view of the worst crisis the region has faced since the end of the Cold War. We believe that the Minsk agreements provide an excellent opportunity for the parties in conflict to take a step back from the spiralling violence in Ukraine and recommit themselves to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Full adherence to the Minsk agreements by both sides would constitute a first step towards the rebuilding of trust and confidence, hopefully leading to a sustainable political solution to the conflict.

Mr. Sarki (Nigeria): I to would like to thank Mr. Feltman, Mr. Šimonović and Mr. Ging for their briefings this morning.

Nigeria notes that the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine is holding, although the situation remains tenuous and precarious. The Minsk agreements provide the basis for a long-term resolution of the crisis in Ukraine. They should therefore be respected and not be undermined by acts that run counter to its provisions. The human rights of all peoples must be respected. Humanitarian assistance must reach all those in need without discrimination.

Nigeria urges all sides in Ukraine to refrain from acts that may threaten the ceasefire and erode the gains made in de-escalating the conflict. The ceasefire is a critical confidence-building measure, an important first step towards the implementation of the political, economic and governance aspects of the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. In our view, the agreements represent a comprehensive framework for a political solution that will hopefully return Ukraine to a state of normalcy and peace and ensure the respect for its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I would like to thank Mr. Feltman, Mr. Šimonović and Mr. Ging for their briefings. Their presentations have helped to provide valuable insight into the overall situation in Ukraine.

The Security Council, through its resolution 2202 (2015), has brought all its weight to bear on the efforts to end the crisis that is the subject of the Minsk agreements, which the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is in charge of implementing. After having heard the representative of the OSCE last week (see S/PV.7391), it seems useful for the Council to have information for evaluating the overall situation. All aspects are relevant for efforts to support the crisis resolution process initiated in Minsk, which is the priority for all of us. In that regard, it is important to remember that the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements devotes an entire paragraph to humanitarian issues: The signatories have committed to ensuring

> "safe access, delivery, storage, and distribution of humanitarian assistance to those in need, on the basis of an international mechanism" (*resolution 2202 (2015), annex I, para. 7*).

The human rights situation in Ukraine has continued to deteriorate in recent months. Here in the Council in mid-November (see S/PV.7311), we denounced the arrival from abroad of reinforcements in terms of weapons and fighters in support of the separatists, which fuelled a new wave of violence that peaked in early February 2015. Mr. Šimonović's report is illuminating on that issue. Nearly 6,000 people have died since the beginning of the crisis in April 2014, including the 298 passengers on the Malaysian Airlines flight.

Civilians have been the main victims of this escalation. I note in particular, and with horror, the ongoing bombing of the evacuation corridors used by people fleeing the combat zones, which has endangered the evacuation operations organized by the Ukrainian Government. Thousands of civilians, such as those in the city of Debaltseve, have found themselves trapped in combat zones.

This conflagration has also given rise to an increase in the number of human rights violations, including acts of torture, summary executions and abductions. International standards have been violated by all parties to the conflict. The east of the country, which is controlled mainly by the separatists, has been turned into a zone of lawlessness. Accordingly, the report emphasizes the importance seeing the perpetrators of those crimes, including most serious crimes, found and brought to justice.

In that context, the humanitarian situation requires the attention of all. The response must be coordinated. The precarious conditions in which people live in eastern Ukraine do not justify Russia's open violations of the sovereignty of the country by bringing in so-called humanitarian convoys without notice, which are only partially monitored by the Ukrainian authorities.

Finally, we remain particularly concerned about the situation of the population of Crimea under the de facto yoke of Russian law. Mr. Šimonović's report describes a situation of arbitrariness and legal uncertainty, where civilians, especially the Tatars, experience regular violations of their human rights and are criminally charged under the Russian justice system for events

that took place prior to the illegal annexation of the territory.

With the signing on 12 February of the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, a new dynamic has emerged. The ceasefire that entered into force on 15 February is now generally respected, although it remains fragile. It has helped to reduce the overall level of violence. De-escalation has been observed on the ground, and the beginning of the withdrawal of heavy weapons extends this dynamic. It is the OSCE's responsibility to verify the withdrawal, as provided for in paragraph 3 of the Minsk package of measures. Other measures relating to human rights and the humanitarian situation must now be encouraged. In that respect, two points would establish confidence.

First, with regard to all the hostages and illegally detained persons, the Minsk agreements provide for their release and exchange on the basis of the principle of "all against all". In that regard, we call on Russia to stop holding people wrongfully detained in its territory, particularly Nadiya Savchenko. Her release would strengthen the first encouraging exchanges of prisoners that have been taking place since 12 February, including 138 Ukrainian soldiers and 52 separatist fighters on 21 February.

Secondly, progress must be made quickly in the coordination of humanitarian assistance, as provided for in paragraph 7 of the Minsk package of measures. All parties to the conflict must guarantee access for international humanitarian assistance to all areas. We welcome the announcement by the Ukrainian Government of the creation of a platform for discussions between Ukrainian officials and representatives of the humanitarian community.

In addition, we support the proposals of Ms. Heidi Tagliavini, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine, to create a working group that would work to resolve all humanitarian, economic and rehabilitation issues. That group would cover the many outstanding issues: the voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees, the reconstruction of housing, food and medical aid, the provision to civilians of food, clothing, schools, and so on. The efforts of all sides will be needed in that regard.

To give substance to the Minsk agreements, all parties must respect all of the points. Full and unconditional access and the security of the OSCE observers, as well as the transmission of information, especially to confirm the withdrawal of heavy weapons, must imperatively be guaranteed by all parties. We expect Russia to encourage the separatist elements to fully implement the commitments they made in Minsk.

In addition, all parties must courageously address all of the political points of the road map drawn up in Minsk to advance towards a comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the crisis. Progress will be possible when all parties are willing to move forward. The Council may be assured of the resolute and continued commitment of France with its partners in the Normandy format and in the framework of the Council to continue on the difficult and demanding path of peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting to discuss the current situation in Ukraine. It is our hope that under your presidency the Ukraine issue will progress further towards a resolution. I thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Mr. Ivan Šimonović and Mr. John Ging for their important and timely briefings. Unfortunately, the facts mentioned today show that the Minsk agreements of 12 February this year, and of 5 and 19 September of last year, have not been implemented in full.

The armed and pro-Russian groups are continuing their attacks on positions and control centres of the Ukrainian armed forces, as well as on civilian residences. Since the ceasefire of 15 February, the militants have carried out over 750 attacks. As a result, the Ukrainian armed forces have lost 64 soldiers and 341 have been wounded. On the last day alone, terrorists attacked positions of the Ukrainian military 58 times. Since the launching of the anti-terrorist operation last year, 1,541 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed and 6,226 wounded.

The Russian side and pro-Russian separatists launched an offensive on the city of Debaltseve, which has already become a symbol of Russia's flagrant violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. As Ambassador Apakan, head of the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), informed the Council last Friday,

> "This was an attempt to create new facts on the ground, and so to change the basis on which the latest package of measures had been agreed. These attacks were against the letter and the spirit of the Minsk agreements." (*S/PV.7395, p.3*)

After Debaltseve, Mariupol is the most likely target of an attack. Furthermore, with the start of the ceasefire, the self-proclaimed leaders of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic demonstrated their reluctance to create conditions that would allow the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to effectively monitor and verify the ceasefire regime and the withdrawal of heavy weapons.

For our part, we remain fully committed to the implementation of the Minsk agreements, including those reached in September 2014. We believe that they remain the road map for seeking a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The Ukrainian armed forces have strictly followed the order issued by the President of Ukraine to implement the ceasefire as of 15 February. Ukraine has continued to withdraw its heavy weapons from the line of contact. At the present time, 150-millimetre artillery weapons have already been removed from the line of contact. Grad missile operations were halted yesterday and the Uragan systems are withdrawing today.

That step was carried out under OSCE monitoring and verification. But the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the Donbas by the Ukrainian Army and the Russian-backed fighters should be carried out simultaneously. Moreover, it must be precisely coordinated and monitored by the OSCE. Ukraine is committed to continuing to provide all necessary assistance to the OSCE in Ukraine in that regard. We once again call on the Russian Federation and the Russian-backed mercenaries to immediately fulfil their obligations under the Minsk agreements and Security Council resolution 2202 (2015). We demand that the Russian Federation influence its agents in eastern Ukraine to guarantee all of the conditions necessary for the OSCE to fulfil its duties in the field.

We find it difficult to trust the words of the Russian side; they have made so many statements. We have lost confidence even in their actions, because there has been no real action; only the pretence of such. We await the outcome of the implementation of the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements of September 2014 and of February 2015.

(*spoke in English*)

The latest report of the Human Rights Mission in Ukraine presented today by Mr. Šimonović dismisses any internal human rights pretext for the ongoing external aggression in Ukraine. On the contrary, it clearly indicates a continuing flow of heavy weaponry and foreign fighters from the Russian Federation into the areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions controlled by illegal armed groups. It is crystal clear that an immediate end to the Russian aggression in the Donbas and the occupation of the Crimea is an indispensable precondition for ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Crimea and the Donbas regions in eastern Ukraine. At the same time, Ukraine is doing its best to take forward a human-rights agenda, including through developing a National Human Rights Strategy, which envisages elaborating a National Action Plan for Human Rights.

By any standard, Russia's detention and ill-treatment of Ms. Nadiya Savchenko constitute a grave violation of human rights. We remind the Russian side that at the Normandy format summit in Minsk on 12 February it was agreed that all hostages and illegally detained persons must be released within 19 days. The agreed measure fully covers the case of Nadiya Savchenko. We call on Russia to honour its commitments by immediately releasing Savchenko and all other Ukrainian hostages.

My delegation is grateful to numerous States and organizations for their clear and strong statements in support of the immediate freeing of Savchenko. We reiterate our protest against the continued attempts by Russian authorities to fabricate new trumped-up charges against other Ukrainian political prisoners in Russia, among whom are Oleg Sentsov and Oleksandr Kolchenko.

A year ago Russia launched its full-fledged aggression against Ukraine. There is no need to remind members of the Council how the occupation and annexation of Crimea was conducted. What is the human rights situation in that occupied territory at the moment? The implementation of Russian laws, which contravenes General Assembly resolution 68/262, has had serious human rights implications. We have witnessed the arrests and detentions of Crimean Tatar activists on totalitarian charges relating to the demonstrations and activities of their civil society organizations, and media outlets are being disrupted

on the false grounds of preventing so-called extremist activities. The arrests, prosecutions and deportations of Crimean Tatar leaders, including People's Deputy of Ukraine Mustafa Dzhemilev, the Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Refat Chubarov, and his Deputy, Ahtem Ciygoz, are politically motivated. Over 10,000 have been forced to leave Crimea for mainland Ukraine. It has been the most serious blow to the Crimean Tatars since the Stalinist deportation.

Those and other outrageous acts must be immediately dealt with by the Council. Under no circumstances can the United Nations accept that Russia has turned Crimea into an isolated military camp and its residents into recluses. We encourage the United Nations to be more persistent in ensuring the implementation of international human-rights treaties and the recommendations of the Human Rights Mission in Ukraine by Russia and the administration installed in Crimea by the occupying Power. They must also allow access by missions of international organizations to the peninsula seeking to monitor the observance of human rights.

More than 6,000 deaths, many thousands of injured people and over one million internally displaced persons — that is the human toll that Ukraine is paying for Russia's intervention. The Ukrainian Government is doing its best to cope with the unfolding humanitarian crisis. We appreciate the United Nations humanitarian efforts, namely, the launch last week, jointly with the Government, of the 2015 humanitarian response plan. The Government of Ukraine devotes great attention to the people who now live in areas temporarily uncontrolled by the Ukrainian authorities. The Ukrainian Government has done everything possible, from supplying gas and electricity to providing humanitarian assistance. Russian-backed militants impede, through shelling and other threats, the efforts of Ukrainian personnel to repair gas pipelines and electricity lines. As for the Ukrainian Government's humanitarian assistance, most of it has not, to date, reached non-Government controlled territories, owing to the refusal of the Russian-backed terrorists to provide safe and unhindered access for humanitarian deliveries and personnel. On 4 February, there was an unfortunate explosion at one of the biggest mines in Donetsk. Our special rescue team was just 45 kilometres away from the mine, and the Ukrainian Government immediately offered to send it there to help extract the miners from below ground. The separatists senselessly and mercilessly refused to let the team in.

For its part, the Russian side continues to send so-called humanitarian convoys without the involvement of the International Committee of the Red Cross and fully excluding the Ukrainian side. What the Russian delegation stated today on the issue of the humanitarian convoys is nothing but an attempt to misinform the international community and the Security Council. I should like to remind the Council that it is not only a serious violation of international and national law; it is a crime.

(*spoke in French*)

In conclusion, a year ago, Russia became like a blind painter who has decided to recolour the international landscape according to his own taste. That is why a series of black marks have appeared, blackening the reputation of the Charter of the United Nations. That black paint was applied by Russia's hand alone. What remains for us to do is to try to remove those black marks on the Council and everywhere else. I would like to thank all members of the Security Council for their support to Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has requested the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I want to say a few words. First, I wish to make a brief comment on Crimea, even though I said earlier that we were not going to discuss Crimea in the Security Council, I will give just one figure — 93 per cent. In a recent opinion poll conducted by a German institute, 93 per cent of the inhabitants of Crimea spoke in favour of reunification with Russia and again confirmed their support for that historic act. We do not need to prove anything to anyone. In regard to the concern that our Ukrainian colleague has expressed for the inhabitants of Crimea, I recall that the Kyiv authorities did everything they could to complicate the lives of the inhabitants of Crimea when they blocked water supplies, electricity and access. The latest news is that they could not find anything better to do than to plant landmines. They put 450 boxes of explosives under a bridge used by local inhabitants to move from Crimea to mainland Ukraine. That is the kind of humanitarianism that the Ukrainian authorities present in its best version. So we will not even discuss this further.

As for my Ukrainian colleague's description of the situation regarding the implementation of the package of measures related to resolution 2202 (2015), his

version is very one-sided. I just want to ask everyone in the Chamber to read the report of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Special Monitoring Mission, which is, generally speaking, objective. It is important to withdraw weapons so that the firing will cease. The representatives of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic began withdrawing weapons first, and were the first to finish the process. The Ukrainian authorities did everything they could to delay it, but finally, as the Ukrainian representative said, President Poroshenko gave an order not to fire and that order is allegedly being carried out. However, we recall that in August President Poroshenko solemnly promised not to bombard cities, following which cities were bombarded for several consecutive months. But I repeat, I want to be an optimist, so let us hope that the positive developments that we are seeing implemented in the package of measures will be further continued.

I also want to comment on another matter that does not fall within the purview of the Security Council, because it has been raised several times. I am talking about Nadiya Savchenko. I never cease to be surprised at how ill-informed some colleagues in the Security Council are. The representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Lyall Grant, asked me a question: Why was Nadiya Savchenko arrested? Has he not read newspapers? She is accused of involvement in the killing of two Russian journalists. That is a very serious accusation. We keep on talking about the fact that we need to protect journalists and that there should be no impunity. She has been accused of that crime. Her detention is in no way illegal, because it was confirmed by our court under our legislation. By the way, the European Court of Human Rights refused to implement rule 39 of the regulations of the Court in this case, which confirms the legality of the detention of this individual.

It has been very strange to hear demands from the representative of the United States to release Savchenko. The American system of jurisprudence and the penitentiary system have never been known for its humanism. In Guantánamo, the United States has held people for over 10 years without even making formal accusations. The prisoners try to commit suicide and go on hunger strikes. They are force-fed, and that is considered normal. I will not even mention that the United States has gotten into the habit of abducting Russian individuals throughout the world, accusing them of things invented, sometimes through provocations by their intelligence services at the end of nowhere, detaining them in subhuman conditions, holding show trials on the territory of the United States, giving them enormously long sentences, subjecting them to constant psychological torture and holding them under trying circumstances. I can assure colleagues that if Nadiya Savchenko were being held in such conditions in the United States, her fate would be predetermined. She would never see the light of day ever.

With regard to our investigation and prosecution, our position is that the investigation and trial will determine whether or not she is guilty. It is not clear on what basis Mr. Šimonović uses his position in the United Nations to make an appeal for the release of Ms. Savchenko. We think that Mr. Šimonović is violating Articles 100 and 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, which requires high-level professionalism, good faith and impartiality of United Nations staff in fulfilling their functions. If Mr. Šimonović wants to change his place of work, he will be able to fulfil his potential in the journalistic sphere, but in the Council let us stick to what representatives of the United Nations are supposed to do.

In conclusion, I have to note, regretfully, that our discussion has been gloomier than it should have been in the light of the initial steps taken in implementing resolution 2202 (2015) and the package of measures agreed to on 12 February. Nevertheless, I express the hope that members of the Security Council will, in good faith, seek to contribute to the further advancement of the process of political resolution in Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the United States has requested the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Power (United States of America): The challenge posed by these back-and-forth statements is that Russia no longer has any credibility whatsoever. None. Russian representatives months ago, at one of the first of the 32 meetings so far on this topic, said that Russia had no soldiers, no heavy weapons and no presence in Crimea. Later, they not only acknowledged having a Russian presence in Crimea but announced the annexation of Crimea — an annexation made possible with the use of military force, the use of Russian military forces. The pretence ends; then the facts retrospectively change.

Russia said not long ago that it would observe the ceasefire agreed upon in the package of measures

to implement the September Minsk agreements. Oops — that was until Debaltseve became a target for Russia and the separatists. Now Russia says that Debaltseve is part of the territory controlled by the separatists, even though it was not during the time that the package of measures was agreed upon.

Today, Russia has made the claim that the separatists have complied with the Minsk agreement in withdrawing their heavy weapons. Yet, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe cannot get access to the heavy weapons, so we are told to rely upon Russian claims about what the fate of those heavy weapons is — heavy weapons that Russia has provided to the separatists. These heavy weapons do not just fall from the sky. These are massive weapons systems, used to shoot down planes and bombard civilian centres, such that 500 people are killed, left in their basements to die and be discovered by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The information that the United States has provided over time to the Security Council has, unfortunately, proven accurate. And indeed the facts on the ground regarding what Russia has absorbed into its current territorial claims are the facts that we have described, day in and day out, at every one of these meetings. In contrast, the claims that Russia makes in the Council give way to new claims at subsequent meetings, but the facts on the ground contradict the prior claims, and the same will be true with regard to the claims that have been made today.

The facts on the ground — which are really all that matter and all that anyone in this Chamber cares about — show Russian aggression, Russia having lopped off part of someone else's country and trying to keep it. The only way that we have a chance of getting to peace in Minsk is if Russia leaves Ukraine and takes its heavy weapons with it.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the United Kingdom has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): Perhaps I could just respond to my Russian colleague as he cited my question specifically. It was unfortunate that he left the Chamber before I actually spoke and perhaps it was mistranslated on the television that he was watching. The question I asked was not why Ms. Nadiya Savchenko had been arrested. I asked why she was still being held, given that Russia had agreed that there would be a full exchange of prisoners as part of the Minsk agreements.

In terms of the facts on which he thought that I was not well-versed, perhaps I can share with colleagues some of the facts of Nadiya Savchenko's arrest. She was actually captured on 17 June 2014 by the Donbas People's Militia inside eastern Ukraine. She was then taken to Russia, where she was charged with involvement in a mortar attack in Ukraine, which killed two Russian State television journalists — an attack which occurred after she had been detained. Then, in addition, in January 2015, Russian investigators said that they had opened a new criminal case against Ms. Savchenko for illegally crossing the border into Russia, which is pretty rich given that she was detained inside eastern Ukraine and then taking forcibly into Russia in the first place.

Those are the facts of this case. The question I asked my Russian colleague, and I repeat it, is why is she still being held when there was an agreement in the Minsk agreements of 12 February that all prisoners would be released?

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, with regard to Ms. Savchenko, an investigation is under way. Accusations have been made and there is a legal procedure under way. In Ukraine, there are many people being detained and held prisoner who are not subject to any legal procedure. The provision of the Minsk agreements with regard to prisoner exchange applies to them. In this case, there is a legal procedure that cannot simply be disregarded.

With regard to the response of Ms. Power, of course she exaggerated greatly with regard to the discussions we have had here in the Security Council since the beginning of the crisis. Let me explain two things that we have discussed, since she brought them up.

When the Minsk agreements were signed on 12 February, it was clear — and we said this very clearly and unequivocally — that before a ceasefire could take effect in the area of Debaltseve, it would be necessary to resolve the issue regarding the withdrawal of Ukrainian soldiers who had been surrounded in that region. The insurgents proposed that they withdraw, and then a ceasefire would have immediately taken effect. Unfortunately, they were given conflicting

orders to break their encirclement. Of course, under such conditions it was very difficult to expect that an immediate ceasefire would take effect. Therefore, for anyone who familiar with the details of this discussion, the situation regarding Debaltseve could not have been a surprise.

As to the last point Ambassador Power raised regarding the location of weapons, this is closely linked to the work of the Special Monitoring Mission, as discussed in the Permanent Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. But the Mission must do what is defined by the package of measures; it must monitor the areas from which weapons are withdrawn. It says nothing about a requirement as to where they were subsequently moved, how they were moved or where they have been stored. As a measure of good faith, the representative of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics did provide such information to the Mission, but I do not know if similar information was provided by the Kyiv authorities.

But our goal is to focus on the tasks to be carried out according to the package of measures, rather than try to add yet further conditions. The task is to determine whether heavy weapons remain in the region from which they are supposed to have been withdrawn. If they do not, then the obligation has been fulfilled. Where they have been taken to or are stockpiled is a secondary matter. There are no grounds to ask such questions of the Special Monitoring Mission. But, again on the basis of good faith, some additional information has been provided by the insurgents.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of Ukraine has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): I would like to make a general observation. Listening to the Russian delegation since last year and here again today, I must repeat what I have been saying since last March. Russia is an arsonist who is trying to play the role of the fire safety inspector. As long as it seek to play such a role, no constructive dialogue will be possible.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The representative of Ukraine would be well advised to choose his words more wisely. Ukraine is a neighbour of Russia, and we are trying to find a solution to the crisis. Therefore Ms. Power should be asked who is an arsonist there — she is laughing now — and what she, together with Mr. Parubiy, set on fire on the Maidan. She could shed some light on that question if she knows the details about the arsonists.

I have one last point, which is connected to the comments made earlier by Ms. Power. People keep talking about Russia as though there were no one in eastern Ukraine trying to fight for their rights. Even if the figures mentioned pertaining to Russian interference were all correct, the fact is that tens of thousands of people have taken up arms to defend their rights in eastern Ukraine. Russia could not force anyone to do that. It would be impossible. Unfortunately, many simply do not wish to see the real situation in eastern Ukraine. That is why the crisis has dragged on.

My Ukrainian colleague said something about artists. In Washington, D.C., they painted for them a very simple picture of who should be toppled and how. There was no need to use paint; a simple pencil sketch was enough. Using that rough pencil sketch, they tried to resolve the political problems of Ukraine. And now we are seeing the results. Now military advisers are being called for. At present Saakashvili is an adviser to the President, and there are 300 advisers. We saw a similar scenario in Georgia in 2008. If that path is chosen, while using colourful words about the role of Russia, this will end very sadly for Ukraine — even more sadly then the events we have seen over the past year.

We would like to avoid that because there are finally signs that the situation can be resolved. There is a package of measures, both military and political, that should be strictly implemented. We should not say, as some have today, that we must first deal with all the military aspects, then deal with the political ones. No, we need to deal with those aspects in parallel, because the range of issues that need to be resolved before the end of the year in accordance with the package is very broad. So we should not lose track of the essence of the issue. We should focus on all the different measures in the package.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the United States of America has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I realize we are taxing the patience of the rest of the Council, so I will be very brief. The Russian representative has several times used the expression "good faith" — as in, we do this or that "in good faith". That is absurd in this context.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.